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# A RESOLUTION Of ſome CASES OF CONSCIENCE Which reſpect Church-Communion.

*VIZ.*

I. Whether to Communicate with ſome Church, eſpecially in ſuch a divided State of the Church, be a neceſſary Duty, Incumbent on all Chriſtians.

II. Whether conſtant Communion be a neceſſary Duty, where occaſional Communion is Lawful.

III. Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two Churches, which are in a State of Separation from each other.

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A

# RESOLUTION

Of ſome

## CASES of CONSCIENCE,

Which reſpect

# Church-Communion.

IN order to ſtate ſuch caſes as particularly relate to Church-Communion with all poſſible clearneſs, it will be neceſſary to premiſe a brief explication of ſome words, which muſt be uſed in queſtions of this nature, but are not ſo commonly underſtood.

As, 1. What is meant by a Church, and a Chriſtian Church.

2. What Church Communion is.

3. What is meant by Fix't Communion and by Occaſional Communion.

Firſt, What is meant by a Church. Now the plaineſt deſcription I can give of a Church is this, *That the Church is a Body or Society of Men ſeparated from the reſt of the World, and United to God, and to themſelves by a Divine Covenant.* I ſhall briefly explain this

deſcription to fit it to the meaneſt underſtanding.

1. Then a Church is a Body or Society of Men, for I ſpeak only of the Church in this World, and therefore ſhall not enter into that diſpute, in what ſenſe Angels belong to the Church.

And when I call the Church a *Body* or *Society* of Men, I oppoſe a *Body* to ſingle *Individuals*, or particular Men, and to *a confuſed Multitude*, without any order or Union among themſelves. For tho the Church conſiſts of particular Men, and when their Numbers are encreaſed, of great Multitudes, yet the Church conſiſts of ſuch particular Men, not conſidered in a private and ſeparate capacity, but as United into a regular Society, which is called a *Body*, in alluſion to the natural Body, in which all the parts and members are United in an exact Order, *Eph.* 4. 16. 1 *Cor.* 12. 15, 16, &c. *For God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints.* And if the meaneſt Societies cannot ſubſiſt without Order, wherein their ſtrength and beauty and uſefulneſs conſiſt, much leſs the Church of God, which is a Society Inſtituted for the moſt Spiritual and Supernatural Ends.

And therefore we find, that God ordained a moſt exact Order and Government in the Jewiſh Church, which for the greater ſtrength and Unity he formed into a religious Common-wealth: And our Bleſſed Saviour ordained the Apoſtles, and committed the Government of his Church to them, and their Succeſſors, with a promiſe *to be with them to the end of the World.* And the Chriſtian Church with reſpect to the firm and cloſe Union and orderly Diſpoſition of all its Parts, is not only called a Body, but a *Spiritual Building*, and *Holy Temple*, and *the Houſe of God.*

*Eph.* 2. 21, 22. 1 *Tim.* 3. 15.

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But then the Church is a Body, or *one* Body, in oppoſition to many bodies, for Chriſt has but one Body, and one Church, and he is the Saviour of this Body. The Jewiſh Church was but one, and therefore the Chriſtian Church is but one, which is not a new diſtinct Church, but is graſted into the Jewiſh ſtock or Root. Believing Jews, and Chriſtians being United into one Church, *built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone:* Who unites Jews and Gentiles into one Church, as the corner ſtone unites both ſides of the Houſe, and holds them together. Rom. 11. 17, 18.

Upon the ſame account the Church is called the *Building*, the *Houſe*, the *Temple* of God, and we know the Temple was but one, and was to be but one, by the expreſs command and Inſtitution of God. And for the ſame reaſon Chriſt tells us, that there ſhould be but *one Fold under one Shepherd.* John 10. 16.

And indeed it is extreemly abſurd and unreaſonable to ſay, that the Chriſtian Church, which is built upon the ſame foundation, which worſhips the ſame God and Saviour, which profeſſes the ſame Faith, are Heirs to the ſame promiſes, and enjoy all priviledges in common, ſhould be divided into as diſtinct and ſeparate bodies, tho of the ſame kind and nature, as *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, are diſtinct Perſons, tho they partake of the ſame common nature. That is, it is very abſurd to ſay, that where every thing is common, there is not one Community. *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, tho they partake of the ſame common nature, yet each of them have a diſtinct eſſence and ſubſiſtence of their own (as it muſt be in natural Beings, otherwiſe there could be but one Man in the World) and this makes them diſtinct Perſons: But where the very nature and eſſence of a Body or Society conſiſts in having all things com-

mon, there can be but one Body; and therefore if *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all*, be common to the whole Chriſtian Church, if there be no peculiar Priviledges, which belong to ſome Chriſtians and not to all, to one part of the Church, and not to another, then by the Inſtitution of Chriſt, there is but one Church, one Body, one Communion, one Houſehold and Family: For where there is nothing to Diſtinguiſh and Separate, no Encloſures or Partitions of Divine Appointment, there can be, by Divine Inſtitution, but one Body.

2. I add, that the Church is a Body or Society of Men ſeparated from the reſt of the World, or called out of the World, as ἐκκλέω, from whence *Eccleſia* is derived, may ſignifie, and is ſo expounded by many Divines, upon which account the Chriſtians are ſo often called, the κλητοὶ, and ἐκλεκτοὶ, the Called and Choſen or Elect People of God, which ſignifies, that the Church is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the World by a peculiar and appropriate Faith, by peculiar Laws, by peculiar rites of Worſhip, and peculiar Promiſes and Priviledges, which are not common to the whole World, but only to thoſe, who are received into the Communion of the Church. But there is no controverſie about this matter, and therefore I need add no more about it.

3. The Church is a Body of Men united to God and to themſelves by a Divine Covenant: The Church is united to God, for it is a Religious Society, inſtituted for the Worſhip of God; and they are united among themſelves, and to each other, becauſe it is but one Body, which requires a union of all its parts; as I have already ſhewed, and ſhall diſcourſe more preſently. But the chief thing to be obſerved here is this, that this union with God, and to each other, which

which conſtitutes a Church, is made by *a Divine Covenant*. Thus it was in the Jewiſh Church. God entered into Covenant with *Abraham*, and choſe him and his Poſterity for his Church and Peculiar People, and gave him Circumciſion for a Sign and Seal of this Covenant. And under the Goſpel God hath made a new Covenant with Mankind, in and by his Son Jeſus Chriſt, who is *the Mediator of a Better Covenant, founded upon better Promiſes*; and this Goſpel Covenant is the foundation of the Chriſtian Church. For the Chriſtian Church is nothing elſe, but ſuch a Society of Men, as is in Covenant with God through Chriſt.

I ſuppoſe all Men will grant, that God only can make or conſtitute a Church. For ſuch perſons, if there were any ſo abſurd, are not worth diſputing with, who dare affirm the Church to be a human Creature, or the Invention of Men.

And I think it is as plain, that the only viſible way God has of forming a Church (for I do not now ſpeak of the inviſible operations of the Divine Spirit) is by granting a Church-Covenant, which is the Divine Charter, whereon the Church is founded, and inveſting ſome perſons with Power and Authority, to receive others into this Covenant, according to the terms and conditions of the Covenant, and by ſuch Covenant Rites and Forms of Admiſſion, as he is pleaſed to inſtitute, which under the Goſpel is Baptiſm, as under the Law it was Circumciſion.

To be taken into Covenant with God, and to be received into the Church, is the very ſame thing. For the Church is a Society of Men, who are in Covenant with God. That can be no Church, which is not in Covenant with God, he is no member of the Church, who is not at leaſt viſibly admitted into Gods Covenant, and whoever is in Covenant with God,

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is made a member of the Church, by being admitted into Covenant.

Now before I proceed, I ſhall briefly obſerve ſome few things, which are ſo plain and evident, if theſe Principles be true, that I need only name them, and yet are of great uſe for the reſolution of ſome following caſes.

As 1. That a Covenant-ſtate and Church-ſtate is the ſame thing.

2. That every profeſt Chriſtian, who is received into Covenant, as ſuch, is a Church member.

3. That nothing elſe is neceſſary to make us members of the Chriſtan Church but only Baptiſm, which is the Sacrament of our admiſſion into the Chriſtian Covenant. For if Baptiſm, which gives us right to all the Priviledges of the Covenant, does not make us Church members, then a Church-ſtate is no part of the Covenant; then a man may be in Covenant with God through Chriſt, and yet be no member of Chriſt; or he may be a member of Chriſt and no member of his Body, which is the Church.

4. That no Church-ſtate can depend upon human Contracts and Covenants, for then a Church would be a human Creature, and a human Conſtitution; whereas a Church can be founded only upon a Divine Covenant. It is true, no man, who is at age, can be admitted to Baptiſm till he profeſs his Faith in Chriſt, and voluntarily undertake the Baptiſmal Vow; but the Independent Church-Covenant betwixt Paſtor and People, is of a very different Nature from this, unleſs any man will ſay, that the voluntary contract and Covenant, which the Independents exact from their members, and wherein they place a Church-ſtate be part of the Baptiſmal Vow. If it be not, then they found the Church upon a human Covenant, for Chriſt

Chriſt hath made but one Covenant with Mankind, which is contained in the Vow of Baptiſm. If it be, then no Man is a Chriſtian, but an Independent, and then they would do well to ſhew, how the Baptiſmal Vow, which is but one and the ſame for all Mankind, determines one Man to be a fixt member of Dr. *Owens* Church, another of Mr. *Griffiths*, or any other Independent Paſtors; and if they could get over this difficulty, there is another ſtill, why they exact this Church-Covenant of Baptized Chriſtians, before they will admit them to their Communion, if Baptiſm makes them members of their Church.

This I think makes it plain, that the Independent Church-Covenant is no part of the Baptiſmal Vow, and then it is no part of the Chriſtian Covenant; and if there be no true Church-ſtate, but what depends on ſuch human Contracts, then the Church owes its being to the will of Men, not to the Covenant of God.

5. I obſerve farther, how abſurd it is to gather Churches out of Churches, which already conſiſt of Baptized Chriſtians. Chriſtianity indeed ſeparates us from the reſt of the World, but ſurely it does not ſeparate Chriſtians from each other. The Apoſtles only undertook to Convert Jews and Heathens to the Chriſtian Faith, and to make them members of the Chriſtian Church, which is a ſtate of ſeparation from the World; but theſe Men Convert Chriſtians from Common Chriſtianity, and the Communion of the univerſal Church, to Independency. If the Church be founded on a divine Covenant, we know no Church but what all Chriſtians are made members of by Baptiſm, which is the univerſal Church, the one Body and Spouſe of Chriſt. And to argue from the Apoſtles gathering Churches from among Jews and Heathens,

Heathens, to prove the gathering Churches out of a Chriſtian and National Church, muſt either conclude, that a Church, and Church-ſtate is a very indifferent and Arbitrary thing, and that Men may be very good Chriſtians, and in a ſafe condition without it; or that Baptized Chriſtians, who are not members of a particular Independent Church, are no better than Jews and Heathens, that is, that Baptiſm it ſelf, though a Divine Sacrament and Seal of the Covenant, is of no value, till it be confirmed and ratified by a human Independent Covenant.

6. I obſerve, that if the Chriſtian Church be founded on a Divine Covenant, on that new Covenant, which God hath made with Mankind in Chriſt, then there is but one Church of which all Chriſtians are members, as there is but one Covenant into which we are all admitted by Baptiſm. For the Church and the Covenant muſt be of an equal extent. There can be but one Church founded upon one Covenant, and all who have an intereſt in the ſame Covenant, are members of the ſame Church.

And therefore, tho the diſtance of place, and the neceſſities and conveniences of Worſhip and Diſcipline, may, and has divided the Church into ſeveral parts and members, and particular Churches, yet the Church cannot be divided into two or more diſtinct and ſeparate Churches, for that deſtroyes the unity of the Church: and unleſs they could divide the Covenant alſo, two Churches, which are not members of each other, cannot partake in the ſame Covenant, but the guilty Divider forfeits his intereſt in the Covenant without a new grant.

A Prince indeed may grant the ſame Charter to ſeveral diſtinct Cities and Corporations, but then tho the matter of the Charter be the ſame, their right to

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it depends upon diſtinct Grants. But if he grant a Charter for the Erecting of ſuch a Corporation, and confine his Charter to the members of that Corporation, thoſe who wilfully ſeparate themſelves from this Corporation to which this Charter was granted, forfeit their intereſt in the Charter, and muſt not think to Erect a new diſtinct Corporation by the ſame Charter.

Thus it is here, God hath made a Covenant of grace with Mankind in Chriſt, and declares that by this one Covenant, he unites all the Diſciples of Chriſt into one Body and Chriſtian Church, who ſhall all partake of the Bleſſings of this Covenant. By Baptiſm we are all received into this Covenant, and admitted members of this one Church; now while we continue in the Unity of this Body, it is evident, that we have a right to all the Bleſſings of the Covenant, which are promiſed to this Body, and to every member of it. But if we divide our ſelves from this Body, and ſet up diſtinct and ſeparate Societies, which we call Churches, but which are not members, nor live in Communion with the one Catholick Church, we cannot carry our Right and Title to the Covenant out of the Church with us.

The Goſpel-Covenant is the common Charter of the Chriſtian-Church, and if we are not contented to enjoy theſe Bleſſings in common with other Chriſtians we muſt be contented to go without them. For it is not a particular Covenant, which God makes with particular Separate Churches, but a general Covenant made with the whole Body of Chriſtians, as United in one Communion, and therefore that, which no particular Church has any intereſt in, but as it is a member of the univerſal Church.

God hath not made any Covenant in particular with the Church of *Geneva*, of *France* or *England*, but

with the one Body and Church of Christ, all the World over; and therefore the only thing, that can give us in particular a right to the Blessings of the Covenant, is, that we observe the conditions of this Covenant, and live in Unity and Communion with all true Christian Churches in the World, which makes us members of the Catholick Church, to whom the Promises are made.

Secondly, The next thing to be explained is, what is meant by Church-Communion. Now Church-Communion signifies no more then Church-Fellowship and Society, and to be in Communion with the Church is to be a member of the Church; and this is called Communion, because all Church members have a common right to Church Priviledges, and a common Obligation to all those Duties and Offices, which a Church relation Exacts from them.

I know this word *Communion* is commonly used to signifie a Personal and presential Communion in Religious Offices: as when Men pray, and hear, and receive the Sacrament of the Lords Supper together, they are said to be in Communion with one another and to live in Communion with that Church, with which they joyn in all Acts of Worship.

Now we must acknowledge, that Publick Acts of Worship performed in the Communion of the Church, are an Exercise of Christian Communion, but Church-Communion is something antecedent to all the Acts and Offices of Communion. For no Man has a right to any Act of Christian Communion, but he, who is in a State of Communion with the Christian Church.

What natural Union is in natural Bodies, that Communion is in Bodies Politick, whether Civil or Religious Societies; a member must be vitally united to the Body, before it can perform any natural Action

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or Office of a member; before the Eye can ſee, or the Feet can walk, or the Ears can hear; and the union of the Eye, or Foot, to the Body, does not conſiſt in ſeeing or walking, but ſeeing and walking are the effects of this Union.

Thus in a Body Politick, when Men by any common Charter are United into one Society, they become one common Body, or one Communion; and this gives them right to all the priviledges of that Body, and obliges them to all the Duties and Offices, which their Charter requires of them; but ſhould any Man, who is not regularly admitted into this Society, pretend to the ſame Priviledges, or do ſuch things, as are required of thoſe, who are members of this Body, this would be ſo far from being thought an Act of Communion with them, that it would be cenſured as an unjuſt Uſurpation. Should a Man, who is no Citizen of *London*, open his Shop, and drive a trade as other Citizens do, or give his Vote at a Common-Hall, and in all other caſes Act like a Citizen, this would not make him a Citizen, but an Intruder. He is a Foreigner ſtill, and his preſuming to Act like a Citizen, when he is none, is no Act of Communion with that Body, of which he is no member, but juſtly expoſes him to cenſure and puniſhment.

Thus it is in the Chriſtian Church, which is one Body and Society united by a Divine Covenant. Our Communion with the Church conſiſts in being members of the Church, which we are made by Baptiſm: The exerciſe of this Communion conſiſts in all thoſe Offices and Duties, which all the members of the Church are obliged to, and which none have any right to perform, but they; ſuch as praying and receiving the Lords Supper together, *&c.*

Now ſhould any Man who is no member of the Church, nor owns himſelf to be ſo, intrude into the Church, and Communicate in all holy Offices, this can be no more called an Act of Communion, then it can be ſaid to make him a member of the Church, of which he is no member, and reſolved not to be: Prayers, and receiving the Sacraments, &c. are Acts of Communion, when performed by Church-members in the Communion of the Church; but they are no Acts of Communion, when performed by thoſe, who are no Church-members, tho to ſerve a turn, they thruſt themſelves into the Society of the Church.

As for Inſtance, ſuppoſe a member of a Presbyterian, or Independent Conventicle, ſhould, for reaſons beſt known to himſelf, at ſome critical time, come to his Pariſh Church, and there hear the Common-Prayer, and Sermon, and receive the Lords Supper, according to the order of the Church of *England*, does this make this Man a member of the Church of *England*, with which he never Communicated before, and it is likely, will never do again? If it does not, all this is no Act of Communion, which can be only between the members of the ſame Body.

So that to be in Church-Communion, does not ſignifie, meerly to perform ſome ſuch Acts, which are Acts of Communion in the members of the Church, but ſince the decay of Church Diſcipline, may ſometimes be performed by thoſe, who are not members, which is ſuch an abuſe, as would not have been allowed in the Primitive Church, who denyed their Communion to Schiſmaticks, as well as to the Excommunicate upon other accounts: but to be in Church-Communion ſignifies to be a member of the Church, to be Embodyed and Incorporated with it, and I ſuppoſe what that means, every one knows, who underſtands what

what it is to be a member of any Society, of a City, or any Inferior Corporation; which conſiſts of Priviledge and Duty, and requires all thoſe, who will enjoy the benefits of ſuch a Society, to diſcharge their reſpective truſts and obligations.

To be in Communion with, or to be a member of the Church, includes a Right and Title to all thoſe Bleſſings, which God hath promiſed to his Church, and an obligation to all the Duties and Offices of Church Society; as Subjection to the Authority, Inſtructions, Cenſures of the Church; a Communion in Prayers, and Sacraments, and other Religious Offices, and he who deſpiſes the Authority, or deſtroys the Unity of the Church, renounces his membership, and Communion with it. Theſe things are extremely plain, and though Men may cavil for diſputes ſake, yet muſt needs convince them, that no Man is in Communion with a Church, which he is not a member of, tho through the defect of Diſcipline, he ſhould ſometimes be admitted to ſome Act of Communion with it, and I ſhall obſerve ſome few things from hence of great uſe.

1. That Church-Communion primarily and principally reſpects the univerſal Church, not any particular Church or Society of Chriſtians. For to be in Church-Communion ſignifies to be a member of the Church, or Body of Chriſt, which is but one all the World over. Church-Communion does not conſiſt in particular Acts of Communion, which can be performed only among thoſe, who are preſent, and Neighbours to each other, but in membership: now a member is a member of the whole Body (not meerly of any part of it,) how large ſoever the Body be. All the Subjects of *England*, thoſe, who live at St. *Davids*, and thoſe at *Yarmouth*, who never ſaw, nor converſt

verſt with each other, are all members of the ſame Kingdom, and by the ſame reaſon, this membership may extend to the remoteſt part of the World, if the Body, whereof we are members, reach ſo far.

And therefore we may obſerve, that Baptiſm, which is the Sacrament of our Admiſſion into the Covenant of God, and the Communion of the Church, does not make us members of any particular Church, as ſuch, but of the Univerſal Church; and I obſerved before, that a Church-ſtate, which is the ſame thing, with Church-Communion, is founded only on a Divine Covenant; and therefore ſince there is no other Divine Covenant to make us members of particular Churches, as diſtinguiſht from the Univerſal Church, ſuch particular Church-membership is at beſt but a human Invention, and indeed nothing elſe but a Schiſm from the Univerſal Church: which alone, if well conſidered, is a ſufficient confutation of Independency which is a particular Church-State, as diſtinguiſht from all other Churches and Societies of Chriſtians.

2. I obſerve further, that tho the exerciſe of Church Communion, as to moſt of the particular Duties and Offices of it, muſt be confined to a particular Church and Congregation (for we cannot Actually joyn in the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, &c. but with ſome particular Church) yet every Act of Chriſtian Communion, though performed in ſome particular Church, is and muſt be an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church, Praying, and Hearing, and receiving the Lords Supper together, does not make us more in Communion with the Church of *England*, then with any other true and Orthodox part of the Church, tho in the Remoteſt parts of the World. The exerciſe of true Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church, is nothing elſe

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but the exerciſe of Catholick Communion in a particular Church, which the neceſſity of affairs requires, ſince all the Chriſtians in the World cannot meet together for Acts of worſhip; But there is nothing in all theſe Acts of Communion, which does more peculiarly Unite us to ſuch a particular Church, than to the whole Chriſtian Church.

When we Pray together to God we Pray to him as the Common Father of all Chriſtians, and do not challenge any peculiar intereſt in him, as members of ſuch a particular Church, but as members of the whole Body of Chriſt: when we Pray in the Name of Chriſt, we conſider him as the great High Prieſt, and Saviour of the Body, who powerfully interceeds for the whole Church, and for us as members of the Univerſal Church. And we Offer up our Prayers and Thankſgivings, not only for our ſelves and thoſe, who are preſent, but for all Chriſtians all the World over, as our Fellow-members; and Praying for one another is the trueſt notion of Communion of Prayers; for Praying with one another, is only in order to Praying for one another. And thus our Prayers are an exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion, when we Pray to the ſame common Father, through the Merits and Mediation of the ſame common Saviour and Redeemer, for the ſame common Bleſſings, for our ſelves, and the whole Chriſtian Church.

Thus when we meet together to Celebrate the Supper of our Lord, we do not meet as at a private Supper, but as at the common Feaſt of Chriſtians; and therefore it is not an Act of particular Church Fellowſhip, but of Catholick Communion. The Supper of our Lord does not ſignifie any other kind of Union and confederation between thoſe Neighbour Chriſtians, who receive together in the ſame Church, than with

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the whole Body of Chriſt. The Sacramental Bread ſignifies and repreſents all thoſe, for whom Chriſt died, that one Myſtical Body, for which he Offered his Natural Body, which is the Univerſal Church; and our eating of this Bread ſignifies our Union to this Body of Chriſt, and therefore is conſidered, as an Act of true Catholick, not of a particular Church-Communion. And the Sacramental Cup is the Blood of the New Teſtament, and therefore repreſents our Communion in all the Bleſſings of the Covenant, and with all thoſe, who are thus in Covenant with God. So that there is nothing particular in this Feaſt, to make it a private Feaſt, or an Act of Communion with a particular Church, conſidered as particular, but it is the common Feaſt of Chriſtians, and an Act of Catholick Communion.

Which by the way plainly ſhews, how groundleſs that ſcruple is againſt mixt Communions, that Men think themſelves defiled by receiving the Lords Supper with Men, who are vicious. For tho it is a great defect in Diſcipline, and a great reproach to the Chriſtian Profeſſion, when wicked Men are not cenſured, and removed from Chriſtian Communion, yet they may as well pretend, that their Communion is defiled by bad Men, who Communicate in any other part of the Church, or any other Congregation, as in that, in which they live and Communicate: For this holy Feaſt ſignifies no other Communion between them, who receive at the ſame time, and in the ſame Company, then it does with all ſincere parts of the Chriſtian Church. It is not a Communion with any Perſons conſidered as preſent, but it is a Communion with the Body of Chriſt and all true members of it, whether preſent or abſent.

Thoſe

Thoſe who ſeparate from a National Church for the ſake of corrupt profeſſors, though they could form a Society as pure and holy, as they ſeem to deſire, yet are Schiſmaticks in it, becauſe they confine their Communion to their own ſelect Company, and Exclude the whole Body of Chriſtians all the World over, out of it; their Communion is no larger than their gathered Church, for if it be, then they muſt ſtill Communicate with thoſe Churches, which have corrupt members, as all viſible Churches on Earth have, (unleſs we will except Independents, becauſe they have the confidence to except themſelves) and then their Separation does not Anſwer its end, which is to avoid ſuch corrupt Communions; and yet if they do confine their Communion to their own gathered Churches, they are Schiſmaticks in dividing themſelves from the Body of Chriſtians; and all their Prayers and Sacraments are not Acts of Chriſtian Communion, but a Schiſmatical Combination.

This does not prove indeed, that particular Churches are not bound to reform themſelves, and to preſerve their own Communion pure from corrupt members, unleſs all the Churches in the World, will do ſo too; becauſe every particular Church, whether Dioceſan, or National, has power to reform its own members, and is accountable to God for ſuch neglects of Diſcipline: but it does prove, that no Church without the guilt of Schiſm, can renounce Communion with other Chriſtian Churches, or ſet up a diſtinct and ſeparate Communion of its own, for the ſake of ſuch corrupt members; which was the pretence of the *Novatian* and *Donatiſt* Schiſm of Old, and is ſo of the Independent Schiſm, at this day.

3. I obſerve further, that our obligation to maintain Communion with a particular Church, wholly

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reſults from our obligation to Catholick Communion. The only reaſon, why I am bound to live in Communion with any particular Church, is becauſe I am a member of the whole Chriſtian Church, which is the Body of Chriſt, and therefore muſt live in Communion with the Chriſtian Church; and yet it is Impoſſible to live in Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, without Actual Communion with ſome part of it; when I am in ſuch a place, where there is a viſible Chriſtian Church; as no member can be United to the Natural Body, without its being United to ſome part of the Body; for the Union and Communion of the whole Body, conſiſts in the Union of all its parts to each other.

Every Act of Chriſtian Communion, though performed in a particular Church, or Congregation, is not properly an Act of particular Church-Communion, but is the exerciſe of Communion with the whole Church and Body of Chriſt, as I have already proved; but it can be no Act of Communion at all, if it be not performed in the Communion of the Church, which it cannot be, unleſs it be performed in the Communion of ſome particular Church. And this is the only obligation, I know of, to Communion with any particular Church, that as I am a Chriſtian, I am a member of the Body and Church of Chriſt, and in a State of Communion, and therefore am bound to maintain Actual Communion with the Chriſtian Church, where-ever I find it, and by Communicating with the Church, wherein I live, if it be a ſound and Orthodox member of the Chriſtian Church, I maintain Communion with the whole Catholick Church, which is but one Body.

So that here is no choice, what Church we will Communicate with, for there is but one Church all the

the World over, with which we muſt Communicate; and therefore we have nothing elſe to do, but to judge, whether that part of the Church, wherein we live, be ſo ſound and Orthodox, that we may Communicate with it according to the Principles of Catholick Communion; and if it be, we are bound to Communicate with it, under Peril of Schiſm from the Catholick Church, if we do not.

4. From hence we may plainly learn the true notion of a Separate Communion, and Separate Church. For ſome Men ſeem to be greatly ſenſible of the ſin and miſchief of Schiſm and Separation, but then they uſe great art, ſo to confound the notion of Separation, as that neither they themſelves, nor any one elſe, ſhall ever be able to underſtand what it is, whereas if they will allow, that there is, or ever can be, any ſuch thing as Separation from the Church, it is as eaſie to underſtand, what Separation is, as what it is for a member to be divided from the Body.

For if there be but one Church, and one Communion, of which all true Chriſtians, and Chriſtian Churches, are, or ought to be members, then thoſe Churches, which are not members of each other, are Separate Churches. It is not enough indeed to prove a Separation, that two Congregations meet in ſeveral places for Worſhip, for this is done by all the Pariſh-Churches of *England*, who are in the ſame Communion, but yet hold diſtinct and Separate Aſſemblies, as to Local ſeparation. Nor is it ſufficient to prove, that there is no Separation, becauſe theſe differing Churches agree in all the Articles of Faith, and eſſentials of worſhip; For thus the *Novatians* and *Donatiſts* did, who yet were Schiſmaticks from the Catholick Church. But where there are two Churches, which are not members of each other,

there is a Schiſm, tho they agree in every thing elſe, but in one Communion; and where Churches own each others Communion, as members of the ſame Body, there is no Schiſm, though they are as diſtant from each other in place, as Eaſt and Weſt.

And it is as eaſie to underſtand, what it is for two Churches to be members of each other; but to make this as plain, as I can, and as far, as it is poſſible, to prevent all Evaſions, and Subterfuges, I ſhall lay down ſome few rules according to the Principles of Catholick Communion, whereby we may certainly know, what Churches are in Communion with each other, and which are Separate and Schiſmatical Conventicles.

1. There muſt be but one Church, in one place, according to that Ancient Rule of the Catholick Church, that there muſt be but one Biſhop in a City; and this was obſerved in the Apoſtolical times, that in the greateſt and moſt Populous Cities, and where there were the greateſt number of Converts, yet there was but one Church, ſuch as *Jeruſalem*, *Antioch*, *Epheſus*, &c. this is acknowledged by the Independents themſelves, who endeavour hence to prove, that there were no more Chriſtians in any of thoſe Cities, than could meet together in one place for Acts of Worſhip, which is a mighty groundleſs Surmiſe, and not much for the credit of the Chriſtian Church, as has been often ſhewn by learned Men, both Epiſcopal and Presbyterian Divines.

And there is an evident reaſon, why this ſhould be ſo, becauſe there is no other Rule of Catholick Communion for private Chriſtians, but to Communicate in all Religious Offices, and all Acts of Government and Diſcipline, with thoſe Chriſtians, with whom they live; for to renounce the ordinary Communion of any Chriſtians, or true Chriſtian Church, is to divide

vide the Unity and Communion of the Church, and to withdraw our ſelves from ordinary Communion with the Church, in which we live, into diſtinct and Separate Societies for Worſhip, is to renounce their Communion; and when there is not a neceſſary cauſe for it, is a Schiſmatical Separation.

So that diſtinct and particular Churches, which are in Communion with each other, muſt have their diſtinct bounds and limits, as every member has its Natural and Proper place and ſituation in the Body. But when there is one Church within the Bowels of another, a new Church gathered out of a Church already conſtituted; and formed into a diſtinct and Separate Society, this divides Chriſtian Communion, and is a notorious Schiſm. Theſe Churches cannot be members of each other, becauſe they ought to be but one Church, and therefore to form and gather a new Church, is to divide and Separate the members of the ſame Church from each other.

This is the plain caſe of the Presbyterian and Independent Churches, and thoſe other Conventicles of Sectaries, which are among us; they are Churches in a Church, Churches formed out of the National Church, by which means Chriſtians, who live together, refuſe to Worſhip God in the ſame Aſſemblies, and have bitter Envyings and Contentions, for the Honour and Purity of their ſeveral Churches.

If all Chriſtians are members of the one Body of Chriſt, nothing can juſtifie the diſtinction of Chriſtians into ſeveral Churches, but only ſuch a diſtance of place, as makes it neceſſary and expedient to put them under the Conduct and Government of ſeveral Biſhops, for the greater Edification of the Church, in the more eaſie and regular Adminiſtration of Diſcipline, and all holy Offices; and therefore nothing can juſtifie the

the gathering of a Church out of a Chriſtian Church, and dividing Neighbour Chriſtians into diſtinct Communions.

Churches at a diſtance may be diſtinct Churches under their diſtinct Biſhops, but yet in the ſame Cõmunion; but diſtinct Churches in the ſame place can never be of the ſame Communion, for then they would Naturally Unite and Cement into one. There muſt either be Antibiſhops, or Schiſmatical Presbyters, ſet up in oppoſition to their Biſhops, under different and oppoſite Rules of Worſhip and Diſcipline, which makes them Rival and oppoſite Churches, not members of each other. From hence I think, it plainly appears, that all Separation from a Church, wherein we live, unleſs there be neceſſary reaſons for it, is Schiſm; and we cannot juſtifie ſuch diſtinct Churches within one another, from the examples of other diſtinct Churches, whoſe bounds, and limits, and juriſdiction alſo, are diſtinct and ſeparate.

2. It is plain, thoſe are Separate Churches, which divide from the Communion of any Church, from any diſlike of its Doctrine, Government, or Worſhip, for in this caſe, it is plain, they leave the Church, and form themſelves into a new Church, out of the Communion of the Church, from whence they went, becauſe they did not think it ſafe to continue one Body with it.

This has often made me wonder, what thoſe Men mean, who take all occaſions to quarrel at our conſtitution, and aſſign a great many reaſons, why they cannot Communicate with us, and yet at the ſame time will not own, that they have made any Separation from us. What middle ſtate now ſhall we find for theſe Men, who will neither continue in the Church, nor allow themſelves to be out of it?

It is poſſible for two particular Churches to be in Communion with each other, and yet not Actually to Communicate together, becauſe diſtance of place will not permit it; but for two Churches to renounce each others Communion, or at leaſt to withdraw ordinary Communion from each other, from a profeſſed diſlike, and yet ſtill to continue in a ſtate of Communion with one another, is a down right contradiction. To be in Communion is to be members of the ſame Body and Society, and he that can prove, and he that can believe, two oppoſite Societies, founded upon contrary principles, and Acting by contrary Rules, and purſuing contrary ends, to the Ruin and Subverſion of each other, to be the ſame Body, and the ſame Society, are very wonderful Men to me.

3. Thoſe are Separate Churches, who do not own each others members, as their own. Actual Communion during our reſidence in any certain place, muſt be confined to that particular Church, in which we live, if it be a ſound part of the Chriſtian Church; but Church-memberſhip is not confined to any particular Church. I am no otherwiſe a member of any particular Church, then I am of the Univerſal Church, which gives me a right of Memberſhip and Communion in all the particular Churches of the World. Now I would ask whether every Baptized Chriſtian, who by Baptiſm is made a member of the Catholick Church, and has not forfeited this right by a Scandalous life, be *ipſo facto* a member of an Independent Church; if he be not, (as it is plain, by the conſtitution of Independency, he is not, for Independent Church-memberſhip is not founded on Baptiſm, but on a particular Church-Covenant;) then Independency is a Separate Communion from the Catholick Church; for the members of the Catholick Church

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are not by being ſo, made the members of an Independent Church, and therefore an Independent Church is a diſtinct and ſeparate Body from the Catholick Church.

Nay I would know whether a member of one Independent Church by being ſo, becomes a member of another Independent Church; if he does not, as it is plain, he do'nt, (for every Independent Church is founded upon a particular Church-Covenant between ſuch a particular Paſtor and particular members) then every Independent Church is a diſtinct and ſeparate Body from all other Independent Churches, and ſo they are all Schiſmaticks to each other, as not preſerving the Unity of the Body.

And tho Independent Churches ſhould be ſo civil to each other, as to admit each others members to ſome Acts of Communion, yet this is matter of courteſie, not of right, and therefore their conſtitution is Schiſmatical. It is like two Neighbour Families, which hold good correſpondence with each other, and often viſit one another, and Eat, and Drink together, but yet remain very diſtinct Families, and have all their concerns apart and ſeparate. But the Chriſtian Church is but one Houſhold and Family, and whoever makes two Families of it, is a Schiſmatick.

Thus let me ask, whether the Epiſcopal, and Presbyterian Churches in the ſame Chriſtian Kingdom, be one Church, and members of each other, and own each others members, as ſuch, to be members of their own Body and Church; If they do not, as it is evident they don't, from their holding diſtinct and ſeparate Aſſemblies, under a diſtinct kind and ſpecies of Government, which both of them aſſert to be inſtituted by Chriſt, and to be eſſential to the conſtitution of the Church, from their forming themſelves into diſtinct Bodies,

dies, under different Governors, which have no Communion, as ſuch, with each other, (which yet is eſſential to the Communion of particular Churches, that their Governors ſhould be in Communion with each other) from their Condemning each others conſtitution, and particular modes of Worſhip, and their great endeavours to draw away members from each other; which neceſſarily ſuppoſes, that they do not look upon each others members, as their own. I ſay, if from theſe conſiderations it appears, that they are not, and do not think themſelves to be, one Body, nor members of each other, then they are two ſeparate Churches, and the Church, which makes the ſeparation is the Schiſmatick.

And indeed we may as well ſay, that a Monarchy, and Ariſtocracy, and Democracy in the ſame Nation, with their diſtinct Governours, and diſtinct Subjects, and diſtinct Laws, that are always at Enmity and War with each other, are but one Kingdom, as to aſſert, that the Epiſcopal and Presbyterian Churches in England, are but one Church.

3. The laſt thing to be explained, is, what is meant by fixt or conſtant, and by occaſional Communion. Now this is a queſtion, which would grievouſly have puzl'd St. *Cyprian* and St. *Auſtin* and other Ancient Fathers, who never heard but of one ſort of Communion. For indeed there is no place for this diſtinction of conſtant and occaſional Communion, according to the Principles of Catholick Communion. To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a member of the Church, and I take it for granted, that a member ſignifies a fixt and conſtant, not an occaſional member; not a member, which is one day a member, and the next day upon his own voluntary choice is no member, which is a member or no member, juſt as

occaſion ſerves. And if Church-memberſhip be a fixt and conſtant relation in it ſelf conſidered, then the Duties of this relation are fixt and conſtant alſo. And therefore for the underſtanding of theſe Terms, which were unknown to Antiquity, we muſt conſult the meaning of our Modern Authors, who were the firſt Inventors of them.

Now by fixt Communion they mean an Actual and conſtant Communicating with ſome one particular Church, as fixt members of it; occaſional Communion is to Pray, and Hear, and receive the Sacrament, at ſome other Church, (of which they do not own themſelves to be members) as occaſion ſerves; that is, either to gratifie their own Curioſity, or to ſerve ſome ſecular end, or to avoid the Imputation of Schiſm.

Now this diſtinction is owing to ſuch Principles, as I have evidently proved to be very great miſtakes.

For if to be in Communion with the Church ſignifie to be a member of it, and that not of any particular Church, as diſtinguiſht from the whole Catholick Church, but to be a member of the one Body of Chriſt, and of every ſound part of it; then our Communion with the Church is as fixt, as our relation and memberſhip is, and I think no Man, who underſtands himſelf, will talk of an occaſional member.

If no Man can perform any Act of Communion with a Church, of which he is no member (ſince all Acts of Communion have a neceſſary relation to a ſtate of Communion, and that, which is an Act of Communion in a member, is no Act of Communion, when performed by him, who is no member, as I have already proved) then it is as plain a contradiction to talk of an occaſional Act of Communion, as of occaſional Memberſhip; and there can be no place

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for occaſional Communion with a Church, of which we are no members, unleſs we will ſay, that a Man, who is not in Communion, may exerciſe Acts of Communion with the Church.

If all the Acts of Chriſtian Communion, which reſpect Chriſtian Worſhip, ſuch as Prayer, receiving the Lords Supper, &c. tho performed in a particular Church, be not Acts meerly of a particular Church-Communion, but of Catholick Communion, with the whole Chriſtian Church, and every ſound part of it, then every true Catholick Chriſtian, is not only in a fixt ſtate of Communion with the Catholick Church, but lives in as conſtant an exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion with all Sound and Orthodox Churches, as he does with that Church, in which he lives; for every Act of Worſhip, which is an Act of Communion with that particular Church, in which it is performed (if that Church be in Catholick Communion) is an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church, and therefore the very exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion, is equally fixt and conſtant, or equally occaſional with the whole Catholick Church.

There is a ſenſe indeed, wherein we may be ſaid to be members of one particular Church conſidered as diſtinct from all other particular Churches, but that principally conſiſts in Government and Diſcipline: every Chriſtian is a member of the whole Chriſtian Church, and in Communion with it, but he is under the immediate Inſtruction and Government of his own Biſhop, and Presbyters, and is bound to Perſonal Communion with them; and this conſtitutes a particular Church, in which all Acts of Worſhip, and all Acts of Diſcipline and Government are under the direction and conduct of a particular Biſhop. And when Neighbour Biſhops unite into one Body, and

agree upon ſome common Rules of Government, and the Adminiſtration of Religious Offices, this makes them a Patriarchal or National Church, and thus by ſubmitting to the Government and Diſcipline of ſuch particular or united Biſhops, we become members of a Dioceſan or National Church, conſidered as diſtinct from other Dioceſan or National Churches; But this does not confine our Church-memberſhip and Communion to ſuch a particular Church, tho it ſtrictly oblige us to conform to the Worſhip, and Diſcipline, and Government of that Church, wherein we live, while it impoſes nothing on us inconſiſtent with the Principles of Catholick Communion.

But tho particular Chriſtians are more peculiarly obliged to obſerve the Rites and Uſages, and to ſubmit to the Government and Diſcipline of the Church, wherein they live, and to maintain Perſonal Communion with it, (and upon this account may in a peculiar manner be called the members of that Church) yet every Act of Communion performed in this particular Church is an Act of Catholick Communion; and an exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion with the whole Church, and every ſound part of it. Baptiſm makes us members of the whole Church, and gives us a right to Communion with every ſound part of it; every Act of Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church is a vertual Communion with the whole Church, with all particular Churches, which live in Communion with each other; and notwithſtanding my relation to a particular Church, by my conſtant Abode and Habitation in it, when ever I travel into any other Church, I Communicate with them as a member; ſo that wherever I Communicate, whether in that Church, in which I uſually live, or in any other particular Church, where I am accidentally preſent, my Com-

Communion is of the ſame Nature, that is, I Communicate as a member of the Church, and it is Impoſſible, I ſhould Communicate otherwiſe; for I have no right to Communion, but as a member, and nothing I can do, can be an Act of Communion, if I be not, and do not own my ſelf to be a member.

And yet this is the occaſion of this miſtake about Fixt and Occaſional Communion; that according to the Laws of our Church, which are founded on great and wiſe reaſons, and indeed according to the Laws of Catholick Communion, every Chriſtian is bound to Communicate with that part of the Church, wherein he lives; now Men may have Houſes in different Pariſhes, or diſtinct Dioceſſes, or may Travel into other parts of the Country, and Communicate with the Churches, which they find in thoſe places, where they are, or they may ſometimes go to Prayers, or hear a Sermon, or receive the Lords Supper at another Pariſh-Church; now our ordinary Communion with thoſe Churches, where our conſtant Abode is, may be called conſtant Communion, and our Communion with thoſe Churches, which we accidentally viſit, and Communicate with, may be called occaſional Communion; and all this without Schiſm, becauſe we ſtill Communicate, either with the ſame National Church, or (which is often the caſe of Travellers) with ſome other ſound part of the Catholick Church, of which we are alſo members, and ſo ſtill keep in the ſame Communion, and communicate with no Churches, but thoſe, of which we own our ſelves members; as being all in the ſame Communion; as being either ſincere members of the National or Catholick Church.

From hence our Diſſenters conclude, that their Communion with an Independent, or Presbyterian, Church,

Church, of which they profeſs themſelves fixt members, is as conſiſtent with their occaſional Communion with the Church of *England*, when to ſerve ſome preſent turn, they hear the Prayers, and receive the Sacraments with us; as our fixt Communion with our Pariſh-Churches is, with our occaſional Communion, with other Pariſh-Churches; which no Body accounts Schiſm, tho when it is too frequent and cauſeleſs, it is a great diſorder.

But the difference between theſe two is vaſtly great, for in the Firſt caſe, we only Communicate with ſuch Churches, which are all in Communion with each other, and therefore he, who is a member of one, is a member of them all, and Communicates with them, wherever he is, as a member. But he, who is a fixt member of a Presbyterian, or Independent Church, cannot Communicate ſo much as occaſionally, with the Church of *England*, as a member, becauſe he is a member not only of another particular, but of a ſeparate Church; and it is impoſſible for any Man, who is one with himſelf, to be a member of two ſeparate Churches, and whatever Acts of Worſhip we joyn in with other Churches, of which we are no members, they are not properly Acts of Communion.

Having thus premiſed the explication of theſe terms, what is meant by *Church*, and what is meant by *Church-Communion*, and what is meant by *Fixt or Conſtant*, and *occaſional Communion*, the right underſtanding of theſe things, will make it very eaſie to reſolve thoſe caſes, which Immediately reſpect Church-Communion, and I ſhall Inſtance in theſe three.

1. Whether Communion with ſome Church or other, eſpecially when the Church is divided into ſo many Sects and Parties, be a neceſſary Duty, incumbent on all Chriſtians. 2. Whe-

2. Whether conſtant Communion with that Church, with which occaſional Communion is Lawful, be a neceſſary Duty.

3. Whether it be Lawful for the ſame perſon, to Communicate with two ſeparate Churches.

Caſe 1. Caſe 1. Whether Communion with ſome Church or other, eſpecially when the Church is divided into ſo many Sects and Parties, be a neceſſary Duty incumbent on all Chriſtians.

Now methinks the reſolution of this is as plain, as whether it be neceſſary for every Man to be a Chriſtian. For every Chriſtian is Baptized into the Communion of the Church, and muſt continue a Member of the Church, till he renounce his Membership by Schiſm, or Infidelity, or be caſt out of the Church by Eccleſiaſtical cenſures.

Baptiſm incorporates us into the Chriſtian Church, that is, makes us Members of the Body of Chriſt, which is his Church and is frequently ſo called in Scripture. For there is but *one Body and one Spirit. Eph.* 4. 4. one Chriſtian Church, which is animated and governed by the one Spirit of Chriſt. And we are all Baptized into this one Body. *For as the Body is one, and hath many Members*, and all the members *of that one Body, being many, are one Body, ſo alſo is Chriſt*, that is, the Chriſtian Church, which is the Body of Chriſt, of which he is the Head; *for by one Spirit we are all Baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be Bond or Free, and are all made to drink into one Spirit; for the body is not one member, but many.*

Eph. 5. 23. 4. 12. Col. 1. 18. 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13.

Now I have already proved, that Church Communion is nothing elſe, but Church-Membership, to be in Communion with the Church, and to be a member of the Church, ſignifying the ſame thing. And I think, I need not prove, that to be in a ſtate of Communion

munion contains both a right, and an Obligation to Actual Communion. He, who is a member of the Church, may Challenge all the Priviledges of a member, among which Actual Communion is none of the leaſt; to be admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Chriſtian-Communion, to the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, and all other Chriſtian Duties, which no Man who is not a member of the Church, has any right to. And he who is a member, is bound to perform all thoſe Duties and Offices, which are Eſſential to Church-Communion, and therefore is bound to Communicate with the Church in Religious Aſſemblies, to joyn in Prayers and Sacraments, to attend publick Inſtructions, and to live like a member of the Church.

But to put this paſt all doubt, *that external and actual Communion is an eſſential Duty of a Church-member*, I ſhall offer theſe plain proofs of it.

1. That Baptiſm makes us Members of the viſible Church of Chriſt, but there can be no viſible Church without viſible Communion, and therefore every viſible Member, by vertue of his Memberſhip, is bound to external and viſible Communion, when it may be had.

2. This is eſſential to the notion of a Church, as it is a Body and Society of Chriſtians. For all Bodies and Societies of Men are Inſtituted for the ſake of ſome common Duties and Offices to be performed by the Members of it. A Body of Men is a Community, and it is a ſtrange kind of Community, in which every Member may act by it ſelf, without any Communication with other Members of the ſame Body. And yet ſuch a kind of Body as this, the Chriſtian Church is, if it be not an eſſential Duty of every Member, to live in the exerciſe of viſible Communion with the Church,

Church, when he can. For there is the ſame Law for all Members, and either all or none, are bound to actual Communion.

But this is more abſurd ſtill, when we conſider, that the Church is ſuch a Body, as conſiſts of variety of Members, of different Offices and Officers, which are of no uſe without actual and viſible Communion of all its Members.

To what purpoſe did Chriſt appoint ſuch variety of Miniſters in his Church, *Apoſtles, Prophets, Evangeliſts, Paſtors, and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt*; to what purpoſe has he inſtituted a ſtanding Miniſtry in his Church, to offer up the Prayers of the Faithful to God, to inſtruct, exhort, reprove, and adminiſter the Chriſtian Sacraments, if private Chriſtians are not bound to maintain Communion with them, in all Religious Offices? Eph. 4. 11, 12.

3. Nay the Nature of Chriſtian Worſhip obliges us to Church-Communion. I ſuppoſe, no Man will deny, but that every Chriſtian is bound to Worſhip God according to our Saviours Inſtitution: and what that is, we cannot learn better, than from the Example of the Primitive Chriſtians, of whom St. *Luke* gives us this account, that *they continued Stedfaſt in the Apoſtles Doctrine, and Worſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.* Acts 2. 41.

That which makes any thing in a Strict ſenſe, an Act of Church-Communion is, that it is performed in the Fellowſhip of the Apoſtles, or in Communion with the Biſhops and Miniſters of the Church; They are appointed to Offer up the Prayers of Chriſtians to God in his Name; and therefore tho the private devotions of Chriſtians are acceptable to God, as the Prayers of Church-Members, yet none but publick Prayers,

which are Offered up by Men who have their Authority from Christ, to Offer these Spiritual Sacrifices to God, are properly the Prayers of the Church, and Acts of Church-Communion. If then we must Offer up our Prayers to God according to Christ's Institution, that is, by the hands of persons Authorized and set apart for that purpose; we must of necessity joyn in the Actual and Visible Communion of the Church.

The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is the principal part of Christian Worship, and we cannot Celebrate this Feast; but in Church-Communion; for this is a κοινωνία a common Supper, or Communion-Feast, which in all Ages of the Church, has been administred by Consecrated Persons, and in Church-Communion; for it loses its Nature and Signification, when it is turned into a private Mass, so that if every Christian is bound to the Actual performance of true Christian Worship, he is bound to an Actual Communion with the Christian Church.

4. We may observe further; that Church Authority is exercised only about Church-Communion, which necessarily supposes, that all Christians, who are Church-Members and in a State of Communion, are bound to all the Acts of external and visible Communion with the Church. The exercise of Church Authority consists in Receiving in, or Shutting out of the Church. To receive into the Church, is to admit them to all external Acts of Communion, to Shut, or Cast, out of the Church, is to deny them the external and visible Communion of the Church; not to allow them to Pray, or receive the Lords Supper, or perform any Religious Offices in the publick Assemblies of the Church. Now all this Church Authority would signifie nothing, were not External and Actual Communion, both the Priviledge and Duty of every Christian; and

yet

yet this is all the Authority Chriſt hath given to His Church.

5. And to confirm all this, nothing is more plain in Scripture, than that Separation from a Church, is to withdraw from the viſible Communion of it, and there can be no Notion of Separation without this; now if Separation from Religious Aſſemblies be to break Communion, then to live in Communion with the Church requires our Actual Communicating with the Church in all Religious Duties.

And that this is the true Notion of Separation is eaſily proved from the moſt expreſs teſtimonies; 2 Cor. 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you:* Where, *come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate*, plainly ſignifies, to forſake the Aſſemblies of Idolaters, not to Communicate with them in their Idolatrous Worſhip; So that not to joyn with any Men or Church in their Idolatrous Worſhip, is to Separate from their Communion, which is a very Godly Separation, when the Worſhip is Idolatrous and Sinful, but a Schiſmatical Separation, when it is not. Thus St. *John* tells us of the Ancient Hereticks; *They went out from us becauſe they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifeſt, that they were not all of us.* Where their going out from them, plainly ſignifies, their forſaking Chriſtian Aſſemblies, upon which account the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* admoniſhes the Chriſtians, *not to forſake the Aſſembling of themſelves together, as the manner of ſome is*, in which he refers to the Separation of thoſe Ancient Hereticks. 1 John 2. 19. Heb. 10. 25.

And thus accordingly to have Fellowſhip or Communion with any, is to partake with them in their

Religious Myſteries. By this Argument St. *Paul* diſſwades the *Corinthians* from Eating of the Idols Feaſt; becauſe they were Sacrifices to Evil Spirits, and by partaking of thoſe Sacrifices they had Communion with them. *But I ſay, that the things, which the Gentiles Sacrifice, they Sacrifice to Devils, and not to God, and I would not that you ſhould have Fellowſhip with Devils. Ye cannot Drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils, ye cannot be partakers of the Lords Table, and of the Table of Devils.* So that, tho we muſt firſt be in a ſtate of Communion with Chriſt, and his Church, muſt firſt be received into Covenant, and by Baptiſm be incorporated into the Chriſtian Church, before we have any right to Communicate with this Church; yet no Man can preſerve his Church-ſtate without Actual Communion, no Man has Communion with Chriſt, or his Church, but he, who Actually Communicates in all Religious Offices, and Chriſtian Inſtitutions; a ſtate of Communion conſers a right to Communicate, but Actual Communion conſiſts in the exerciſe of Communion, and a right to Communicate without Actual Communion is worth nothing, as no right or priviledge is without the Exerciſe of it; for enjoyment conſiſts in Acts, and all the Bleſſings of the Goſpel, all the Bleſſings of Chriſtian Communion, are conveyed to us by Actual Communion. So that if we would partake in the Bleſſings of Chriſt, if we would Reap the advantages of Church-Communion, we muſt live in Actual Communion, and not content our ſelves with a dormant and uſeleſs right, which we never bring into Act.

1 Cor. 10. 20, 21.

This is ſufficient to prove, the neceſſity of Actual Communion with the Chriſtian Church, when it may be had, for where it cannot be had, Non-Communion is no Sin, for we are not obliged to Impoſſibilities;

ſibilities; he who lives in a Country, or travels through any Country, where there is no true Chriſtian Church to Communicate with, cannot enjoy Actual Communion; the right and Duty of Communion continues, tho neceſſity may ſuſpend the Act. But the greater difficulty is, whether it be not Lawful, to ſuſpend our Communion with any particular Churches, when we ſee the Church divided into a great many Parties and Factions, which refuſe Communion with each other, which is the deplorable ſtate of the Church at this day among us, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptiſts, Quakers, all Separate from the Church of *England*, and from each other, and from hence ſome conclude it Lawful to ſuſpend Communion with all theſe divided Parties, which is juſt ſuch a reaſon for a Total ſuſpenſion of Church-Communion, as the different and contrary opinions in Religion are for Scepticiſm and infidelity. Becauſe there are a great many kinds of Religions in the World, and a great many divided Sects of the Chriſtian Religion, therefore ſome Men will be of no Religion; and becauſe the Chriſtian Church is divided into a great many oppoſite and Separate Communions, therefore others will be of no Church; and the reaſon is as ſtrong in one caſe, as it is in the other, that is, indeed it holds in neither: For it is poſſible to diſcover, which is the true Religion, notwithſtanding all theſe different and contrary perſwaſions about it, and it is equally poſſible to find out, which of theſe divided Communions is a true and ſound Member of the Catholick Church, and when we know that, we are bound to maintain Communion with it.

Indeed if ſuch Diviſions and Separations; excuſe us from Actual Communion with the Church, Actual Communion never was, and is never likely to be a

Duty

Duty long together; For there never was any ſtate of the Church ſo happy long together, as to be without diviſions: even in the Apoſtles times, there were thoſe, who Separated from the Communion of the Apoſtles, and ſet up private Conventicles of their own, and ſo it has been in all ſucceeding Ages of the Church, and ſo it is likely to continue, and if we are not bound to Communicate with the Church, while there are any Hereticks, or Schiſmaticks, who divide from the Church, farewell to all Church Communion in this World.

Should any Man indeed Travel into a Strange Country, and there find a Schiſm in the Chriſtian Church, it were very fitting for him to Suſpend Communion with either Party, till he had opportunity to acquaint himſelf with the ſtate of the Controverſie, ſo as to judge, which party is the Schiſmatick; and then he is bound (if he underſtand their Language) to Communicate with the ſound and Orthodox part of the Catholick Church, which he finds in that place. But this does not reach the caſe of thoſe, who are conſtant Inhabitants of the place, where the Schiſm is; for they muſt not live in a Sceptical ſuſpenſion of Communion all their days.

And there is one plain Rule to direct all Men in this Inquiry; That wherever there is a Church Eſtabliſht by publick Authority, if there be nothing Sinful in its Conſtitution and Worſhip, we are bound to Communicate with that Church, and to reject the Communion of all other Parties and Sects of Chriſtians. For the advantage always lies on the ſide of Authority, no publick eſtabliſhment can juſtifie a Sinful Communion, but if there be nothing Sinful in the Communion of the National Church, which is Eſtabliſht by publick Authority, to Separate from ſuch a Church is both

both diſobedience to the Supreme Authority in the State, and a Schiſm from the Church.

But it will be convenient to conſider, what theſe Men mean by ſuſpending Communion. For is it Lawful for an *Engliſh* Man during theſe Church diviſions among us, never to Worſhip God in any Publick and Religious Aſſemblies? Never to Pray, nor Hear, nor receive the Lords Supper together? If this were ſo, it were the moſt Effectual way in the World to thruſt out all Religion.

But this they will not, they dare not ſay, and therefore by Suſpending Communion they mean, that in caſe of ſuch diviſions they may refuſe to enter themſelves fixt and ſetled Members of any Church, but Communicate occaſionally with them all.

But I have already obſerved how abſurd this diſtinction of fixt and occaſional Communion is. For no Act of Religion is an Act of Communion (not ſo much as of occaſional Communion) which is not performed in the Communion of the Church; and no Man is in Communion with the Church, who is not a Member of it, and whoever is a Member of the Church is a fixt and not an occaſional Member; and whatever Church he Communicates with, tho it may be, it is but once in a Year, or once in his Life, as he occaſionally Travels that way, yet he Communicates as a fixt Member of the Catholick Church, and of every ſound part of the Catholick Church; for a fixt Member does not ſignifie our fixt abode, or conſtant Acts of Communion in any particular Church, but our ſtate of Communion, and fixt and permanent relation to the whole Chriſtian Church, and every part of it, and therefore tho a particular Act of Communion may be performed upon ſome particular occaſion with

with ſuch a particular Church, yet it is not an Act of occaſional, but of fixt Communion, becauſe tho I Communicate but once and that occaſionally, yet I Communicate as a Member of the Church, which is not an occaſional but a fixt Relation.

So that when Men Communicate occaſionally, as they ſpeak, with all the different Parties of Chriſtians in a divided Church, they either Communicate with none, or Communicate with all of them. If they perform theſe Acts of Communion, without owning their relation to them, as Members, then they are in Communion with none of them, notwithſtanding all theſe pretended Acts of occaſional Commmunion, and ſo they live in Communion with no Church, which yet I hope, I have made it appear to be the Duty of every Chriſtin to do; if they Communicate with all theſe divided Parties, as Members, then they are in Communion with many Separate Churches, are Members of Separate and Oppoſite Bodies, that is, they are contrary to themſelves, and on one ſide or other, are certain to be Schiſmaticks, but this will appear further from conſidering the two following Caſes.

Caſe 2. The Second Caſe is this; *Whether conſtant Communion be a Duty, where occaſional Communion is Lawful.* I have already made it appear, that the very notion of conſtant and occaſional Communion is abſurd, and a contradiction to all the principles of Catholick Communion, and therefore there is no place for this diſtinction, nor for this queſtion, every Chriſtian, as a Chriſtian, is a fixt Member of the whole Chriſtian Church, and of every ſound part of it, and for Men to talk of being Members of any one particular Church, in diſtinction from all other particular Churches, of which they will not own themſelves Members, is a Schiſmatical notion of Church-Memberſhip, becauſe it

it divides the Chriſtian Church into diſtinct Memberſhips, and therefore into diſtinct Bodies, which makes the one Church and one Body of Chriſt, not one, but many Bodies: for if every particular Church has ſuch a number of Members, which are Members only of that particular Church, wherein they are fixt, and are not Members of any other particular Church, then every particular Church is a diſtinct and entire Body by it ſelf, which has particular Members of its own, which belong to no other Body; juſt as every particular Man has his own Body, which conſiſts of ſuch a number of Members, united to each other, and diſtinct from all other Bodies.

The plain ſtate of the Caſe in ſhort is this: Every true Chriſtian is in Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, that is, is a Member of the whole Church; but he muſt perform the Acts of Communion in ſome particular Church, and the only allowable difference between conſtant and occaſional Communion is this; that we muſt perform the conſtant Acts of Communion in that part of the Catholick Church, in which we conſtantly live, and Communicate occaſionally with that part of the Church, in which we are occaſionally preſent; and therefore there never can be any Competition between conſtant and occaſional Communion in the ſame place. I cannot Communicate conſtantly with that Church in which I Communicate occaſionally, unleſs I remove my Habitation, and turn an occaſional preſence into a conſtant and ſetled abode; nor can I without ſin Communicate only occaſionally with that Church, with which I may and ought to Communicate conſtantly, as being conſtantly preſent there, for this is only to do that ſometimes, which I ought to do always. This is like a Mans living occaſionally in his own Houſe,

which ſignifies, that for the moſt part he is a ſtranger at home.

There cannot be two diſtinct Churches in the ſame place, one for occaſional, and another for conſtant Communion, without Schiſm, For it is evident, theſe are two diſtinct Communions, and that our relation to them is as different, as it is to a Houſe we live in, and to an Inn, where we lodge for a Night.

So that there is no foundation for this Inquiry among Men, who underſtand the true Principles of Catholick-Communion; It never can be a Caſe of Conſcience, whether I ſhould Communicate conſtantly or occaſionally with ſuch a Church, unleſs it be a Caſe of Conſcience, whether I ſhould live conſtantly or occaſionally within the bounds and juriſdiction of ſuch a Church; for where my conſtant abode is, there my conſtant Communion muſt be, if there be a true and ſincere part of the Catholick-Church in that place, and where I am only occaſionally, there I can only Communicate occaſionally alſo.

But to meet with the diſtempers of this Age, and to remove thoſe Apologies ſome Men make for their Schiſm, it is neceſſary to make this a queſtion. For in this divided ſtate of the Church, there are a great many among us, who think, they cannot maintain conſtant Communion with the Church of *England*, as conſtant and fixt Members, who yet upon ſome occaſions think, they may Communicate with us in all parts of Worſhip, and Actually do ſo.

Now when theſe Men, who are fixt Members, as they call it, of Separate Churches, think fit ſometimes to Communicate in all parts of Worſhip with the Church of *England*, we charitably ſuppoſe, that Men, who pretend to ſo much tenderneſs of Conſcience, and care of their Souls, will do nothing, not ſo much as once, which

which they believe, or ſuſpect, to be ſinful, at the time, when they do it; and therefore we conclude, that thoſe, who Communicate occaſionally with the Church of *England*, do thereby declare, that they believe, there is nothing ſinful in our Communion; and we thank them for this good opinion they expreſs of our Church, and earneſtly deſire to know, how they can juſtifie their ordinary Separation from ſuch a Church, as requires no ſinful terms of Communion.

If any thing leſs than ſinful terms of Communion can juſtifie a Separation, then there can be no end of Separations, and Catholick-Communion is an Impoſſible and Impracticable notion, that is, the Church of Chriſt neither is one Body, nor ever can be. For if Men are not bound to Communicate with a Church, which obſerves our Saviours Inſtitutions, without any ſuch corrupt mixtures, as make its Communion ſinful, then there is no bounds to be ſet to the Fancies of Men, but they may new model Churches, and divide and ſubdivide without any end.

Is that a ſound and Orthodox part of the Catholick-Church, which has nothing ſinful in its Communion? If it be not, Pray what is it, that makes any Church Sound and Orthodox? If it be, upon what account is it Lawful, to ſeparate from a Sound and Orthodox Church? and may we not by the ſame reaſon ſeparate from the whole Catholick Church, as from any Sound part of it? Nay does not that Man Separate from the whole Catholick Church, who Separates from any Sound part of it? For the Communion of the Church is but one, and he, that divides and Breaks this union, Separates himſelf from the whole Body.

Excepting the Independency of Churches (which I have proved above to be Schiſm in the very notion of it) the great Pleas for Separation from a Church, which has nothing ſinful in its Communion, are the pretence of greater Edification, and purer Ordinances. But theſe are ſuch Pleas, as muſt expoſe the Church to Eternal Schiſms, becauſe there are no certain Rules to judge of theſe matters, but the various and uncertain fancies of Men. What they like beſt, that ſhall be moſt for their Edification, and theſe ſhall be purer Ordinances, and till Men can agree theſe matters among themſelves, which they are never likely to do, till they can all agree in the ſame Diet; or in their judgment and opinion about beauty, decency, fitneſs, convenience, they may and will divide without end; and if the Peace and Unity of the Church be ſo neceſſary a duty, it is certain, theſe Principles, which are ſo deſtructive to Peace and Unity, muſt be falſe, as to conſider theſe things particularly, but very briefly.

What purer Adminiſtrations and Ordinances would Men have, than thoſe of our Saviours own Inſtitution, without any Corrupt and ſinful mixtures, to ſpoil their vertue and efficacy? (as we ſuppoſe is acknowledged by thoſe, who occaſionally Communicate in all parts of our Worſhip, that there is nothing ſinful in it) the purity of divine Adminſtrations muſt conſiſt in their agreement with the Inſtitution, that there is neither any ſuch defect or addition, as alters their Nature and deſtroys their Vertue. For the Efficacy of Goſpel Ordinances depends upon their Inſtitution, not upon particular modes of Adminiſtration, which are not expreſly Commanded in the Goſpel; and he, who deſires greater purity of Ordinances than their conformity to their Inſtitution, who thinks, that Baptiſm and the Lords Supper loſe their Efficacy, unleſs they

they be adminiſtred in that way, which they themſelves beſt like, are guilty of groſs Superſtition, and attribute the vertue of Sacraments to the manner of their adminiſtration, not to their divine Inſtitution.

And what Men talk of greater Edification is generally as little underſtood as the other; for Edification is building up, and is applied to the Church, conſidered as Gods Houſe and Temple, and it is an odd way of building up the Temple of God, by dividing and Separating the parts of it from each other.

This one thing well conſidered, *viz.* That οἰκοδομὴ Edification or Building, according to the Scripture notion of it, does always primarily refer to, or at leaſt include, Church-unity and Communion, is ſufficient to convince any Man, what an ill way it is, to ſeek for greater Edification in breaking the Communion of the Church by Schiſm and Separation; and therefore I ſhall make it plainly appear, that this is the true Scripture notion of Edification; and to that end ſhall conſider the moſt material places, where this word is uſed.

Now the moſt proper ſignification of οἰκοδομὴ, which our Tranſlators render by *Edification*, is a Houſe or Building, and this is the proper Senſe, wherein it belongs to the Chriſtian Church, *Ye are Gods Huſbandry, ye are Gods Building*, that is, the Church is Gods Houſe or Building, οἰκοδομὴ. Thus the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that in Chriſt, *the whole Building* (*i.e.* the whole Chriſtian Church) *fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord.* Hence the Governours of the Church are called Builders, οἰκοδομοῦντες, and the Apoſtles are called *Labourers together with God*, in erecting this Spiritual Building, and St. *Paul* calls himſelf a *Maſter Builder*. Hence the increaſe, growth and advances towards perfection

1 Cor. 3. 9.

Eph. 2. 21.

Matth. 21. 42.

Acts 4. 11.

1 Cor. 3. 9.

10

fection in the Church, is called the Building, or Edification of it. For this reason St. *Paul* commends Propheſie, or Expounding the Scriptures, before ſpeaking in unknown Tongues without an Interpreter, becauſe by this the Church receives Building or Edification. All theſe Spiritual gifts, which were beſtowed on the Chriſtians, were for the Building and Edifying of the Church. The Apoſtolical power in Church cenſures was for *Edification, not for Deſtruction,* εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν to Build, and not to pull down, that is, to preſerve the Unity of the Church intire, and its Communion pure.

1 Cor. 14. 5.

v. 12.

2 Cor. 10. 8. 12. 19. 13. 10.

And we may obſerve that this Edification is primarily applied to the Church, *That the Church may receive Edifying*: *That ye may excell to the Edifying of the Church*: *For the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt*, And it is very obſervable: wherein the Apoſtle places the Edification of the Body of Chriſt, *viz.* in Unity and Love. *Till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.* Till we are united by one Faith into one Body, and perfect Man. *And ſpeaking the truth in love, may grow up in him into all things, which is the head, Even Chriſt from whom the whole Body fitly joyned together, and compacted by that, which every joynt ſupplieth, according to the Effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the Body, unto the Edifying it ſelf in love.* This is an admirable deſcription of the Unity of the Church, in which all the parts are cloſely united and compacted together, as Stones and Timber are to make one Houſe; and thus they grow into one Body, and increaſe in mutual Love, and Charity, which is the very Building and Edification of the Church, which is Edifyed and Built up in love, as the Apoſtle adds, *that*

1 Cor. 14. 5. 12. Eph. 4. 12. 13. 15, 16. 1 Cor. 8. 1.

*that knowledge puffeth up, but Charity Edifieth*, this Builds up the Church of Chriſt; and that not ſuch a common Charity as we have for all Mankind; but ſuch a love and Sympathy, as is peculiar to the Members of the ſame Body, and which none but Members can have for each other, and now methinks I need not prove, that Schiſm and Separation is the not for Edification of the Church; to Separate for Edification is to pull down inſtead of Buildin; up.

But theſe Men do not ſeem to have any great regard to the Edification of the Church, but only to their own particular Edification, and we muſt grant, that Edification is ſometimes applied to particular Chriſtians in Scripture, according to St. *Pauls* Exhortation, *Comfort your ſelves together, and Edifie one another, even as alſo ye do.* And this Edifying one another without queſtion ſignifies our promoting each others growth and progreſs in all ChriſtianGraces and Vertues: and ſo the Building and Edification of the Church, ſignifies the growth and Improvement of the Church in all Spiritual Wiſdom and knowledge, and Chriſtian graces, the Edification of the Church conſiſts in the Edification of particular Chriſtians, but then this is called Edification or Building, becauſe this growth and Improvement is in the Unity and Communion of the Church, and makes them one Spiritual Houſe and Temple. Thus the Church is called the Temple of God, and every particular Chriſtian is Gods Temple, wherein the Holy Spirit dwells, and yet God has but one Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells only in the Church of Chriſt; but particular Chriſtians are Gods Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them, as living Members of the Chriſtian Church; and thus by the ſame reaſon, the Church is Edified and Built up, as it grows into a Spiritual Houſe and Holy Temple,

1 Theſ. 5. 11.

ple by a firm and close Union and Communion of all its parts; and every Christian is Edified, as he grows up in all Christian Graces and Vertues in the Unity of the Church.

And therefore whatever extraordinary means of Edification Men may fancy to themselves in a Separation, the Apostle knew no Edification, but in the Communion of the Church; and indeed if our growth and increase in all Grace and Vertue, be more owing to the internal assistances of the Divine Spirit, than to
1 Cor. 3. 6, 7. the external Administrations, as St. *Paul* tells us, *I have planted, and* Apollos *watered, but God gave the increase: So then, neither is he, that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that gave the increase*: And the Divine Spirit confine his influences and operations to the unity of the Church (as the
Eph. 4. 4. same Apostle tells us, that there is but *one Body and one Spirit*, (which plainly signifies, that the operations of this one Spirit, are appropriated to this one Body, as the Soul is to the Body it Animates) then it does not seem a very likely way for Edification to cut our selves off from the Unity of Christs Body.

Case 3. 3. The Third and Last Case still remains, which will be resolved in a few words, according to the Principles now laid down, which is this: *Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two distinct and Separate Churches.* For this is thought of late days, not only a very Innocent and Lawful thing, but the true Catholick-Spirit, and Catholick-Communion, to Communicate with Churches of all Communions, unless perhaps they may except the Papists, and Quakers. It is thought a Schismatical Principle, to refuse to Communicate with those Churches, which withdraw Communion from us. And thus some, who Communicate ordinarily with the Church of *England*, make

make no Scruple to Communicate in Prayers and Sacraments with Presbyterian and Independent Churches, and Presbyterians can Communicate with the Church of *England*, and with Independents, whom formerly they charged with down-right Schiſm; and ſome think it very indifferent, whom they Communicate with, and therefore take their turns in all. But this is as contrary to all the Principles of Church-Communion, as any thing can poſſibly be.

To be in Communion with the Church is to be a Member of it, and to be a Member of two Separate and oppoſite Churches, is to be as contrary to our ſelves, as thoſe Separate Churches, are to each other.

Chriſt hath but one Church, and one Body, and therefore where there are two Churches divided from each other by Separate Communions, there is a Schiſm and Rent in the Body, and whoever Communicates with both theſe Churches, on one ſide or other, Communicates in a Schiſm.

That the Presbyterian and Independent Churches, have made an Actual Separation from the Church of *England*, I have evidently proved already; and therefore if the Communion of the Church of *England* be Lawful (as thoſe, who can, and ordinarily do Communicate with the Church of *England*, muſt be preſumed to acknowledge) then they are Schiſmaticks, and to Communicate with them is to partake in their Schiſm.

Now if Schiſm be an Innocent thing, and the true Catholick Spirit, I have no more to ſay, but that the whole Chriſtian Church, ever ſince the Apoſtles times, has been in a very great miſtake; but if Schiſm be a very great Sin, and that which will Damn us, as ſoon as Adultery and Murder, then it muſt needs be a dangerous thing to Communicate with Schiſmaticks.

The Sum of all in ſhort is this. Beſides theſe Men, who juſtifie their Separation from the Church of *England*, by charging Her with requiring Sinful terms of Communion, (which is the only thing, that can juſtifie their Separation, if it could be proved) there are others, who Separate lightly and wantonly, for want of a due ſenſe of the Nature of Church-Communion, and our obligations to preſerve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. They have no notion at all of a Church, or no notion of one Church, or know not, wherein the Unity and Communion of this Church conſiſts; and theſe Men think, it is indifferent, whether they Communicate with any Church at all, or that they ſecure themſelves from Schiſm by Communicating ſometimes with one Church, and ſometimes with another; that they may chooſe their Church according to their own fancies, and change again, when ever their humor alters. But I hope, who ever conſiders carefully, what I have now writ, and attends to thoſe paſſionate Exhortations of the Goſpel to Peace, and Unity, and Brotherly Love, which cannot be preſerved but in one Communion, which is the Unity of the Body of Chriſt, and the Peace and Love of fellow Members, will not only heartily Pray to the God of Peace, to reſtore Peace and Unity to his Church, but will be careful, how he divides the Church himſelf, and will uſe his utmoſt endeavours to heal the preſent Schiſms and Diviſions of the Church of Chriſt.

THE END.

[7.1]

# THREE LETTERS TO Dr. Sherlock CONCERNING Church-Communion.

WHEREIN

'Tis enquired whether the Doctor's Notion of *Church-Communion* be not too narrow and uncharitable, both to Diſſenters, and Men of larger Principles.

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By a *LAY-MAN* of the Church of *England*, and in conſtant Communion with it.
at least so pretending.

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